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SUBJECT: SLOVAK RESPONSE TO LONG-TERM STRATEGY ON GEORGIA

REF: 07 STATE 134559

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission, Keith Eddins, for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) In a January 2 farewell call on departing Slovak Foreign Minister Kubis, Ambassador foreshadowed reftel points, emphasizing the U.S. desire for a united Georgia, but acknowledging that we were engaged in a long-term process. Kubis welcomed U.S. willingness to solicit European thinking, and urged the new U.S. administration to be clear in its non-recognition policy; the Russians won't change their position, he argued, thus the need to ensure that no other countries recognize South Ossetia or Abkhazia. Kubis, who is leaving Bratislava for a UN post in Geneva, opined that the time-frame for securing reintegration of the break-away Georgian provinces may be akin to the 40 years it took the Baltic States to achieve independence from the Soviet Union.

¶2. (C) Kubis was doubtful about a carrot-and-stick approach working, but did believe that forcing South Ossetian and Abkhazian officials to travel on Georgia passports would be a useful signal. He emphasized that it wouldn't be enough to simply prevent them from using their own passports, but they should not be permitted to travel on Russian documents either. Kubis was also doubtful that any progress could be made until the political leadership changes in Georgia, although he made clear that Slovakia still fully supports the existing government. He was hopeful that the OSCE could continue to remain engaged, even if the mission were closed, and he noted that the EU mission would continue to offer a useful diplomatic platform. Finally, he advised against any moves to accelerate Georgian membership in NATO, suggesting that sticking with the December 2008 Brussels NAC language would help us avoid an unnecessary confrontation at the April 2009 NATO Summit.

¶3. (C) DCM followed up in greater detail with Stefan Rozkopal, the MFA's Director for Russia/CIS, on January 8, reviewing all of the talking points and emphasizing the U.S. desire to consult closely with our allies on this important subject. Rozkopal's preliminary response was positive, and he expressed appreciation for the U.S. initiative to develop a long-term strategy in consultation with NATO allies. With respect to specific proposals, Rozkopal did not anticipate any opposition from the GOS. He did, however, flag the potential difficulty of preventing European investors from flocking to Abkhazia to get a piece of the Sochi Olympic construction bonanza.

¶4. (C) Rozkopal commented that in developing the strategy, it would be particularly important to accurately gauge the aspirations of the South Ossetians and Abkhaz. In that regard, the Georgians would have to take the lead in reaching out to both. Rozkopal expressed chagrin that Russia had come out "ahead" (at least in its own estimation) in the aftermath

of its invasion of Georgia. While he acknowledged that the war and the global financial crisis had weakened the Russian economy, Rozkopal argued that Russia's leaders feel emboldened and believed they were now being taken more seriously by the U.S. and Europeans. Hence, Rozkopal was not at all surprised by Russia's decision to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine and Europe

15. (C) Rozkopal asked that we share with the MFA reactions from other EU capitals as we move forward with the consultation process.

OBSITNIK